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FEMA

Disaster News

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FEDERAL DECLARATION FOR NEBRASKA ICE STORM PROVIDES AID TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS BUT AID TO INDIVIDUALS IS NOT AUTHORIZED

GRAND ISLAND, NE - The January 7, 2007 disaster declaration for the Nebraska ice storms means that funding will be available to assist public entities in their recovery efforts. Help for individuals, however, is not included in that declaration.

The authorizing legislation for the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency's individual assistance program requires that a state have a sufficient number of damaged and destroyed primary residences to be eligible for the program. When authorized, the aid is provided to individuals based on the amount of damage they sustained and the personal property they lost. Because the ice storm disrupted lives primarily through a loss of power, it is not the type of loss covered by the program.

Assistance is available, however, through other sources. The Nebraska Rural Response Hotline, **(800) 464-0258**, is a free statewide resource for farmers, ranchers, and their families. When a call is made to the Hotline, an experienced staff member will discuss issues and needs, provide helpful information, and refer the caller to available resources. The Hotline is sponsored by the Farm Crisis Response Council through Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska. It is privately funded; and those wishing to make donations can do it through their toll-free number.

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture has established a hotline to assist agricultural producers in need of generators to pump water for livestock or farms. Those with access to available generators are encouraged to call the hotline, which is available toll-free at **(800) 422-6692**, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. CT.

The Nebraska Cattlemen have established a hotline for producers with hay to donate to those in need, available at **308-762-3005**. Additional information for ag producers is also available online at <http://www.agr.ne.gov>.

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In addition, the state of Nebraska is offering unemployment assistance to those affected by the ice storms. To file for unemployment, and to allow the claim to be back dated, Nebraska residents must call 877-725-9918. **DO NOT FILE ON-LINE.** Callers will need to answer a series of questions in an automated system before speaking to a live person at the end of the call.

During the automated question prompts, when the caller is asked if they are “job attached”, they must answer "yes". They will then be asked for a date they are returning to work. The claimant should indicate a date at least 30 days out for this question—even if they do not have a guarantee of when they are returning. This is due to a special exemption for the ice storm, as many will not have a guaranteed date to return to work.

At the end of the call, individuals filing the claim must tell the "live" person that they are from the Holdrege and surrounding area, another affected area, or that they have been affected by the storm.

FEMA manages federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident, initiates mitigation activities and manages the National Flood Insurance Program. FEMA works closely with state and local emergency managers, law enforcement personnel, firefighters and other first responders. FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on March 1, 2003.

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